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Students Poised to Launch Experiments on NASA Rocket

They have been working feverishly for nine months to prepare their experiments for launch aboard a NASA rocket to the upper limits of Earth's atmosphere.

Preparing proposals, developing plans, fabricating and wiring components, and hours of meetings with NASA personnel, students from five states will see their efforts pay off with the launch of a NASA sounding rocket on June 5 from the Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

The students in elementary and high schools from across the country will descend on the NASA facility the week of June 1 to take part in the final preparations of their experiments, view the launch and learn about the success of their efforts.

Part of the NASA Student Involvement Program (NSIP), the sounding rocket launch provides students with the opportunity to take what they learn in the classroom and apply it in a unique hands-on space flight activity.

"The students that participate in this program learn the process of developing and flying experiments on rockets," said Phil Eberspeaker, chief of the NASA Sounding Rocket Projects Office at Wallops. "In addition, while at Wallops they learn about rocketry and the teamwork involved to launch experiments into space. We want them to get excited about becoming scientists and engineers," Eberspeaker said.

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Students from four high schools in New York, Georgia, Illinois and Minnesota have been working closely with Wallops engineers and technicians to prepare their experiments for the 6 a.m. flight on the 20-foot tall rocket to more than 25 miles (40 kilometers) altitude.

The student experiments focus on satellite communications, spectral imaging and analysis, and materials and fluids in a high stress environment. The flight will expose the experiments to stresses 15 times Earth's gravity.

In addition to the high school experiments, the rocket also will carry an experiment on static electricity developed by students from Mason-Dixon Elementary School in Blacksville, WV. A group of the students also will attend the launch.

Lynn Marra, NSIP Manager, said, "The flight opportunities provided through NSIP allows these students to experience first hand the work of engineers, technicians, and scientists. From this experience, NASA hopes that these students continue to pursue degrees and later careers in technical fields."

In addition to the sounding rocket flight, students from four high schools will travel to Wallops the week of June 8 as part of NSIP to prepare experiments for flight on a future space shuttle mission.

The NSIP activities, including the rocket launch, will be web cast on:

http://www.wff.nasa.gov/pages/video_schedule.html#launch

Information on the NASA Student Involvement Program is available at:

<http://education.nasa.gov/nsip/index.html>